

Patchy Blues survive last minute scare

By MICHAEL KNOX: Wycombe Wands. 1, Staines 0

TO win when playing below par is an important ingredient for any championship chasing side, and in that respect Wycombe's victory over Staines on Tuesday night was highly encouraging.

While all their main rivals were faltering, Wycombe at least secured three points in awkward conditions to regain their third position in the Berge Isthmian League Premier Division table.

This was a distinctly patchy Wycombe performance and although they can point to a weakened side playing on a tricky surface, this cannot totally explain their poor display.

Wanderers were without three of their first choice players, Mick Holfield (groin strain) and Bobby Davies (swollen toe) were both injured and Tony Price was serving a one week suspension following his sending off at Worcester.

The change of personnel required something of a reshuffle in the side — and this is where some of their problems lay. Keith Mead and Ken Wilson slotted in nicely for Davies and Price but the move that brought Gary Toll in for Holfield was not an overwhelming success.

Toll, struggling on the frosty surface, played in the front line with Steve Long dropping back to mid-field, a position in which he rarely excels.

Only a slow thaw during the day allowed this match to go ahead, but the frost had left some sting in the ground, making close control difficult. But it cannot excuse some desperately wayward passing from both sides.

Wycombe produced their best football in the first half and Long twice went close before Terry Glynn, making a welcome return to form, scored the only goal of the game in the 23rd minute.

For the only time in the match they were able to string a few passes together. After receiving the ball from Wilson, Jim Jacobs worked a neat one-two with Glynn before shooting for goal.

The ball struck goalkeeper Rick Collier on the legs and rebounded straight to Glynn, who fired into the empty net from eight yards.

draw. Several times, he nodded the ball down for colleagues, who were slow to react.

While trailing by only a single goal, Staines were always in with a chance of grabbing an equaliser and when Steve Emmanuel raced on to Kemp's through ball in the 90th minute they seemed certain to do so.

Seeing Lester rushing off his line Emmanuel fired a perfectly struck shot from the edge of the penalty area. But to his dismay and Wycombe's delight the ball thundered against the bar and was cleared to safety.

Wycombe, for the first time in many games, enjoyed a bit of luck and this is

another vital factor in any title challenge.

WYCOMBE: G. Lester; P. Birdseye, G. Borg, S. Hardwick, K. Mead, R. Dell, S. Long, J. Jacobs, T. Glynn, G. Toll, K. Wilson. Sub: H. Kennedy (not used).

STAINES: R. Collier; A. Gane, I. McGonagle, D. Jordan, K. Fidler, K. Seeger, C. Hennessey, B. Bennett, P. Kemp, D. Casey, S. Emmanuel. Sub: A. Brown (not used).

Referee: D. Keen (Reading). **Half-time:** 1-0. **Scorer:** Wycombe — Glynn (23 mins). **Attendance:** 580.

Wanderers can go second tomorrow

WYCOMBE, who have moved steadily up the table following a series of six consecutive home wins, will jump into second place tomorrow (Saturday) if they beat Sutton United at Loakes Park.

Sutton, looking strong contenders in an open title race, leapfrogged into second place with a 4-1 win at Dagenham on Saturday and will give the Blues a real test.

Wanderers, with eleven wins and three draws in their last 14 home Berge Isthmian League matches, must keep their unbeaten sequence going if they are to remain in the hunt, because after Christmas they will face a spate of away matches.

Toll jeered

They will not be at full strength for this crucial match. Dangerous winger Tony Price is still serving out his one week suspension following his sending off at Worcester, while their must be doubts about the fitness of Mick Holfield (groin strain) and Bobby Davies (swollen toe). Mike Keen hopes they

will have recovered in time. One of the replacements on Tuesday night was Gary Toll who came in for a series of jeers from the supporters — an action that Mr Keen regrets.

"I think the crowd are being a little unfair to Gary. He's not a pretty player but he is a great trier and it takes all sorts of footballers to make a team," Mr Keen said.

Wycombe will need all the support they can get tomorrow, because Sutton have a really well balanced side. At the centre of it all is veteran Larry Pritchard, who is approaching 650 first team games for the club. He played quite a few too for Wycombe in the 1970s.

Pritchard, 36, one of the most respected players in the game, is surrounded by talented footballers. The defence is particularly strong with the Rains brothers and two big signings Steve Rogers and Bobby Green from Dulwich and Tooting respectively.

Up front Mickey Joyce is the leading scorer with 20 goals, while on the wing they

have a talented teenager in Ray Sunnucks.

They have not lost a league game on a Saturday this season. Wycombe will be trying to end that record tomorrow.

BERGE ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enfield	27	14	8	5	55	31	50
Sutton	24	12	8	4	47	31	44
Wycombe	25	12	7	6	44	29	43
Dagenham	27	11	9	7	52	40	42
Dulwich	25	10	9	6	43	35	39
Harrow	24	11	5	8	44	29	38
Slough	20	10	8	2	29	18	38
Bromley	25	10	7	8	43	42	37
Hayes	23	11	4	8	22	25	37
*Barking	29	10	6	13	41	52	34
Leytonstone	22	9	6	7	42	35	33
Woking	27	9	3	15	31	43	30
Boreham Wd	23	7	8	8	32	30	29
Tooting	25	8	5	12	27	34	29
Hitchin	20	7	6	7	27	22	27
Carshalton	21	8	1	12	29	43	25
Walthamstow	24	7	4	13	23	40	25
Staines	24	6	6	12	24	34	24
Croydon	21	4	11	6	18	20	23
Harlow	22	5	8	9	27	36	23
Leatherhead	27	4	11	12	18	32	23
Hendon	21	5	6	10	24	33	21

*2 pts deducted

Blues disco

Wycombe Wanderers players are staging their Christmas disco in the Blues Club at Loakes Park tomorrow (Saturday). Tickets are available from Paul Birdseye, George Borg and Bob Hart.

Apart from a couple of runs and crosses by the improving Wilson in the second half, Wycombe never threatened again as the match became dreadfully tagged.

Staines, for their part, had only one effort on target the whole game. Peter Kemp, a constant worry in the air to the Wycombe defence, saw a neat header saved.

Had Kemp enjoyed better support upfront Staines could well have snatched a